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A
FRIENDLY ADMONITION
TO THE
CHURCHMAN,
ON THE
SENSE AND SUFFICIENCY OF HIS RELIGION;
IN
TWO SERMONS,
On the Text of Matth. xviii. 17.

ADDRESSED TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF THE
PARISH OF PASTON, IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE,

By WILLIAM JONES, A.M.
RECTOR OF PASTON.

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1796.



[TO THE

CONGREGATION

AT

PASTON.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

HAVING more employment in my profession than will admit of my attending upon you so often as I wish, it is my endeavour, when I speak to you from the pulpit, to give you as much truth as I possibly can in a small compass.

It can be no offence to any of you to suppose, that as members of a congregation in the Church of England, you may stand in need of some serious admonition, concerning the nature of your profession. Too many there are, who follow the Church from custom, without considering and applying personally to themselves what the Religion of
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the Church teaches and requires. My business, in what I here present to you, is to put you in mind of the sense and spirit of your worship, and to prove that you can have no just cause to depart from it.

It gave me a sincere pleasure to find that I was heard with so much attention when I spake to you upon this subject; and that you wished for an opportunity of reading and laying up in your minds what I then delivered. In consequence of which, the following Discourses are printed, and very affectionately recommended to your farther consideration.

That God Almighty may give you his Grace to apply them effectually; to your comfort here, and your eternal happiness hereafter; is the hearty prayer of

Your brother and servant,

For Christ's sake,

Aug. 6, 1796.

W. JONES.

S E R M O N I.

MATTH. xviii. 17.

HEAR THE CHURCH.

THERE are two sorts of Christians, who do not hear the Church; and of these, one sort is IN the Church. There are also two great errors, into which Christian people are betrayed; the first supposes, that the Church will save men *without godliness*; the second, that godliness will save men *without the Church*. The first was the error of the Jews, and is now the error of too many, who call themselves Churchmen: the other is the error of those that leave the Church to follow some private way of worship. Very plain rules may be laid down, by which both these parties may judge of themselves, if they will but be honest and sincere: and as the case of the Churchman is of nearer concern, I shall in this discourse address myself to him in the first place.

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His profession is right: but it will do him no good, unless he is wise enough to keep up to the design and spirit of it. All the living creatures, which God hath made, are endued with *form* and *life*. There is no life that we know of without form. And the Church, which God hath made, is of a like constitution. It hath its forms, its sacraments, its ordinances; and with these, it has a life, sense, and spirit of them; without which, the Church is nothing but a form; that is, a body without a soul. Every Christian is taught, that with the sign, there is the thing signified. The sign is a pledge for information and assurance: the thing signified, is the inward and spiritual part: and neither of these can be, what God intended it should be, without the other. With every doctrine of the Church, there is a moral, or practice, which should attend it: and the latter should always follow; according to that admonition, *be ye doers of the word and not hearers only*. But here the Churchman falls into a mistake: if he complies with the form, he is too apt to think himself safe; and his mistake is the same as that of the Jew was formerly. If the Jew was circumcised on the eighth day, he
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was called a son of Abraham; and such he was; but not by the sign without the sense of it. For there was a circumcision made with hands; and there was another circumcision made without hands, which was inward upon the heart, by the power of God's Holy Spirit, disposing and enabling a man to put away all carnal and unclean affections. This latter was the inward and spiritual grace, without which a person was uncircumcised *in heart*. By the outward circumcision, he became a Jew; but unless the inward and spiritual were added, he was not a *true Jew*; not an *Israelite indeed*.

The case is the same, and the danger is the same, at this time, with the Christian, in regard to Baptism. The outward sign is water; and the promise of God to the office and authority of the Christian Ministry makes that water effectual to the purpose intended. But what is the sense of the sign? What is it that water doeth? It washes and cleanses: and what that doeth to the outward man, the Spirit of God doeth to the inward. But the effect may remain with us; or, it may be lost. He that is washed may remain white and pure, as the sheep doth; or, he may return again to

the mire, as the swine doth. From the lives of too many Christians, it appears, that they have returned to the vileness of nature, and are now in the midst of it, defiling themselves with that sinfulness, which it is the work of Baptism to wash away.

The *true* Churchman is therefore mindful of his Baptism; knowing that its real value is not in the washing with water, but in the *new creature**. He therefore continues in newness of life; according to that petition of the office in his behalf, wherein the Church prays, that he may *lead the rest of his life according to that beginning*; that he may be *dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness*. The end of Baptism is *everlasting life*: for it makes us *members of Christ*, and consequently *heirs with Christ* of his Father's kingdom; but all this must be through a present life of righteousness. In this we have the true sense of Baptism: it is not only a *birth* but a *life*, never to be departed from. For Christ being dead unto sin, *dieth no more*, but liveth for ever unto God: and the Christian is to be conformed to the same pattern; sin should no more *have dominion* over him: then is Baptism

* Gal. vi. 15. what

what it should be, and what the Church intends, and prays for, from the beginning.

The service of the Church requires every person to repeat the Articles of the Apostles Creed: and so far we may be said to *witness a good confession*. But does he that repeats the Creed endeavour to practise it? I say, practise it: for the Christian faith is practised in the Christian life: if not, it will be a witness against us; every word we repeat will condemn us. A man may say, he *believes in God*; but does he live as if he believed in him? Does he serve him, and shew the world that his faith is real by the life it produces? He believes that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary: but, is he *born of God*: and doth it appear to himself, or to any body else, that he is a *spiritual* man, begotten again by the Gospel to newness of life? He believes that Jesus Christ was crucified: but is *he* crucified? Is the *old man* of sin, that was born in him, put to *death*? Is he hated by bad people, for the good that is about him? Does he, for the sake of Christ, suffer any thing with Christ: or is he conformed to the world, that he may suffer nothing? He believes in the Holy

Ghost: does he also believe, that the Holy Ghost now worketh in the Church for the remission of sin: that he is the Lord and giver of life; that there is no life to the soul of man without him; and that it is impossible to think a good thought, or do a good action, without the help of the good Spirit of God moving and assisting us; and that the Spirit is therefore most eminently called *the gift of God*, without which all other gifts and endowments are vain? He believes that the Church is *holy*: but has it made *him* holy; or, does he desire that it should *ever* make him holy? An unholy person may be in the Church; as he was at the feast, who was without a wedding garment; or, as the bad fishes were inclosed in the same net with the good ones: but he cannot continue; for when God shall come, to cast out all things that offend, he will not abide that inquisition.

The Commandments may be considered in the same way. For the honour of God, and the benefit of those who belong to the Church, they are commonly written about the Altar, and held up before our eyes. This is a very good custom, and agrees well with our profession; but then, the Churchman is to remember,

member, that the Commandments which are written upon our walls, are to be written upon our hearts: for this is the promise of God to the Gentiles, when they should be called into the Church of Christ: *I will put my law in their inward part, and write it in their hearts**: and when this promise was fulfilled in the Gentiles, the Apostle boasts of them to the Jews, for the *work of the law written in their hearts*; so written, that no man had now any occasion to *teach another*; because the law transcribed into his own heart was thenceforward a source of teaching *to himself*; sufficient for admonition or justification to the conscience; or, as the Apostle words it, *their thoughts accusing or else excusing one another*. So should the law now be written in the hearts of us Gentile-Christians, as a constant, and I may say, a *portable* rule of our obedience.

If the matter of the Commandments be well considered, particularly of the first and second, the sense extends much farther than we may suppose at first sight. For the heart of man, as well as his eyes, may have its idols. We are to have none but the true

* Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10.

God in our *thoughts*: and instead of placing idols before the *imagination*, we are to *set the Lord always before us*; to be mindful, that he sees all our actions, and knows all our thoughts, and that his *eyes are in every place*: that he is the author of our happiness; and, as such, the supreme object of our love and affection. If we trust to any thing for our happiness more than to God, that object, whatever it may be; whether it be wealth, or pleasure, or fame, takes the place of God; and we become, in sense and effect, *Idolaters*. If we love the things of the world and trust in them, the world is our God. When the Apostle says, *whose God is their belly**, he means, that all are idolaters, and the worst of idolaters, even *self-worshippers*, who make the gratification of their appetites the object of their actions, instead of making the Commandments of God the rule of their obedience. They act as their lusts command; not as God commands; and so, their belly is their God. This may seem a coarse expression, but it is very true: the happiness of such a person being like that of a beast, which knows of nothing above this present life. If the heart be set upon diversions,

* Phil. iii. 19.

spectacles, appearance, precedence, or any other thing which is merely of this world; it signifieth not what the object is, if it takes the affections away from God, to whom they are due; and in comparison of whom, all things are to be given up, if he requires it; even father, mother, wife, children; yea, and life itself also. This is our Saviour's doctrine to his Disciples: God will have no competitor.

Let every Churchman then ask himself, with this attention to the sense of the Commandments, "Do I shew that I have God for *my* God, by loving his worship? Do I frequent it when I have an opportunity? Or, do I put it from me as a thing that is needless, and prefer some other employment?" If that should be the case, then you have some higher object of your affections; some other God, whom you secretly prefer to the true. You may say, this is rigid doctrine; but this is the doctrine to which you and I are bound, if we are Churchmen indeed, and not in name and appearance only; and I should deceive you if I were to preach any other. I cannot here go through the Commandments; but I give you a key, with the help

help of which you may go through them for yourselves.

You are commanded farther to *love your neighbour as yourself*: by which it is meant, that you should act toward him by the same rule and measure as you would act toward yourself. He that means to hurt himself is justly accounted a madman; for no man in his right senses ever yet *hated his own flesh*: therefore certainly you are not to hurt your neighbour by any *injurious act*: no, nor by any *injurious word*. But now let every person ask himself, “ Did I never raise any evil report against a neighbour, whom I do not like? Or, if I do not make evil myself, do I never take a pleasure in *bearing* it; and afterwards in reporting what I hear?” This ought not to be; what envy delights to publish, charity should delight to conceal; for by so doing our own faults will be covered; of which we have much need. All the Commandments might be treated in this way: but instead of proceeding farther, let me observe to you again concerning them all, that it will signify little to you, how much the Church excels the Conventicle, in having the Commandments of God fairly written in letters
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of gold, to remind people of their duty; unless they are also written in the heart, and made a rule of action: or, as the Apostle speaks, in language taken from the original history of the Commandments, unless they are transcribed from the tables of stone to the fleshly tables of the heart*. For the heart of man is by nature as hard as those tables on which the Commandments were first engraved: but God hath promised by the Prophet, to change that heart of stone into an heart of flesh, a substance soft and yielding on which an impression may be made: and when it is made, let us pray, and let us endeavour, that it may never be effaced any more.

I would speak with you a little in the same way about the other Sacrament of the Church, the Supper of the Lord. It is a blessed thing that the Church of England, after the example of the primitive times, offers it so frequently to the people: while perhaps among some other classes of Christians, the observation of it is neglected for a year, or several years, together. You are therefore to thank God, that you have such frequent opportu-

* 2 Cor. iii. 3.

nities of partaking of the Holy Communion; and you do well in appearing there; but then you are seriously to ask yourselves, what brings you there? Is it custom; or the example of your neighbours; or the fear of being singular? Or, is it, as it ought to be, a belief in Christ as the *life of the world*; and a desire to partake of that life? Do you go, as the Hebrews went, out in the wilderness to gather manna *for their life*; knowing that your spiritual life cannot be supported in this wilderness without *bread from heaven*? Do you go for the *strengthening and refreshing of your souls*, as the Catechism properly expresses it; that like labouring men you may be better enabled to *work out your own salvation*; and, together with your spiritual strength, receive a pledge of a blessed resurrection and a glorious immortality?

I have hitherto said nothing of the duty of *prayer*. But here the Church most eminently leads the way, in appointing a form of morning and evening service for every day of the year; and particular forms for every season of the year. But does it give us only the form? Does it not also teach us the sense and spirit of prayer: that prayer is an evidence
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of the Christian life, as breathing is the evidence of our natural life: that we are under dangers and necessities, out of which nothing but the right-hand of God, stretched out to those that cry unto him, can possibly save and deliver us? It therefore supposes that Churchmen pray every day—twice a-day—as they certainly ought, either at the Church, or in their families, or both. What must (or rather what *does*) become of families who do not pray together? What must become of single persons who do not pray for themselves by themselves? By disuse they become more and more averse to the duty, and farther from God in their lives and conversations; and he, of course, is farther from them. Such persons therefore as do not accustom themselves to pray; what are they? Are they true members of the Church of England? If they do not pray, they are not Christians; and cannot be said to be members of any Church: they cast themselves out of all Churches. Their life is a passage through storms and tempests over a dangerous sea: what will become of them in life? What will become of them in death? What will become of them after death? For the soul will continue in such a
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state after death, as it lives and dies in. If it dies without prayer, it will continue without God. The souls of the righteous are represented to us in the Revelation as still continuing in prayer, and uttering to God what was the petition of their lives, *how long, O Lord, holy and true**, &c. In this language do they cry unto God to fulfil that righteous judgment upon the world, which the Church of the living prayeth for; particularly in the Burial Service, where we call upon God to *accomplish the number of his elect, and to hasten his kingdom.*

Enough has been said, I hope, to convince you, what it is, in propriety of speech, to *hear* the Church: that it is not to hear with your *ears* only, but to understand with your *heart*; to keep up to the sense of her doctrines, and the life and spirit of her forms. When our blessed Saviour described in few words the character of *Nathaniel*, he said, *behold an Israelite indeed*: for all were not Israel in spirit, that were of Israel by their birth and education. So may we now say of him, that keeps up to the *life*, while he follows the forms of the Church; *behold a Churchman indeed*: and

* Rev. vi. 10.

it is devoutly to be wished, that the portrait I have drawn were more frequently verified. But as there were not many *Nathaniels* when Christ visited the Church of Israel; so it is to be feared, that of the *Nathaniels* of the present day there is no great number: and there will be fewer every day, if the delusions and deceptions, with which mankind are so easily drawn away, should increase upon us as they have of late years. I have shewn you plainly how the character is to be attained: and instead of blaming me, as if I had brought up a new doctrine to disturb your consciences, you are to examine yourselves impartially by this plain rule of *hearing the Church*. You may have persuaded yourselves, that if you believe the facts of Christianity, you have the religion of the Church; and that nothing more is necessary. But the facts of the Christian history are all *without* you: what is it that happens *within* you? Do you believe the inward distempered state of your nature; and that the Gospel is a remedy, sent from Heaven to those who are *poor and blind, and naked**? To believe the Gospel truly, is not to believe that there is such a thing as

* Rev. iii. 17.

the Gospel, (for the Devils know that;) but that it is the power of God for the salvation of man: that there is no life without the spirit of it; no teaching without the light of it: that the wisdom of nature can never shew us the will of God; and the works of nature never render us acceptable to Him: that if laws are *written in the heart*, they are God's laws, transferred to the heart, according to his promise, by the power of his Grace. If this be your religion, we may then truly say that you are a Churchman; and every good man will allow it. But if you take the outside of Christianity, Christianity will never be more than the outside of you: your religion will be a form, and you yourself will be a lifeless Christian. On this subject, no rule is so worthy to be remembered, as that short and plain rule of the Apostle: *he is a Jew, which is one inwardly**. For all the gifts of God's religion are inward: nothing but signs are outward; and if the Churchman is an outward Christian, he is nothing but the sign of a Christian; with no more true life in him, than the sign of a man's head, which is painted on a board: and how bright and

* Rom. ii. 29.

glaring soever the colours may be, it is but a board at last.

I do not say these things with design to reflect upon any person in particular: my design is to stir up the minds of you all by way of remembrance, and prevent a fatal security, of which there is too much in all places. Many are prevailed upon to leave the Church, and frequent other assemblies, because there is nothing but form amongst us: and whoever he may be, that contributes to the truth of the accusation, he is a partaker in other men's sins; he is answerable for the ill use that is made of the fact, to intice people from the sober and edifying worship of the Church. Be in earnest then in your profession: be sincere, and alive, as you ought to be, and you will disarm them: perhaps you may convert them from the error of their ways: but if not, you will secure yourself: the Church of God will be to you what he intended it should be to all; and the promises made to *it* will be made to *you*.

And now, my friends, having taken courage to speak a little plain truth to Christians of our own sort; reason and duty require, that I should be as plain when I speak of Christians,

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who are of a different sort, who think they are better than we are. The godliness which we want, they profess to have. They know that our ungodliness will not save us *in* the Church, but they think that their own godliness will save them *out* of it. How far that may be true or false, is a question which deserves great consideration: and I shall, for your security, answer it as far as I am able on a plain principle, the application of which will require but few words. I conclude at present with a prayer for both parties: not that you, or I, or they, may distinguish ourselves; for which all mankind are so given to strive; but that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

SERMON

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SERMON II

MATTH. xviii. 17.

HEAR THE CHURCH.

I Reminded you, in a former discourse, that Christians are betrayed into the two great errors, of living in the Church without godliness; and of professing godliness without living in the Church. In opposition to the former of these I shewed you, that true godliness is the sense and spirit of all the forms and services of the Church; and that forms and services have no meaning, unless they are so understood and applied. Men may call themselves Churchmen, while they are without the life of the Church: but they are not Churchmen indeed, and will certainly fall short of the benefits of their profession. This case, I think, was made so plain, that no reasonable person could misunderstand it.

That you may not fall into the other error, of professing godliness independent of the

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Church, I am now to shew you what dangers there are on that side; and to do this effectually, I shall lay down a plain and easy doctrine, which none can deny, and which all may understand. When this is done, we shall be upon firm ground; and may apply the doctrine as we find occasion.

I say then, that man consists of a soul and a body, which the Scripture distinguishes by the inner and the outward man. I say farther, that this being the nature of man, his soul cannot be taught but through the senses of the body; whence all the institutions of God, who teaches after a perfect manner, will have something outward to teach, when there is something inward to be understood: or, in the plain words of our Catechism, that if there be any *inward and spiritual grace*, it will be attended with some *outward and visible sign, for a pledge and assurance thereof*. Hence it will follow, that if God has planted any Church upon earth, that Church will be outward and visible, as well as inward and spiritual; and that we must be of the Church outwardly, in order to be of the Church inwardly.

Thus

Thus we shall find the matter to be upon examination. The Apostle teaches us, that *as the body is one, and hath many members—so also is Christ: for by one spirit we are all baptized into one body**. This body being called *Christ*, we cannot be members of Christ without being members of this body. So far as Baptism is an invisible work of Grace, it makes us members of an invisible society: but Baptism being also a visible thing, there must be a visible body answering to it. From this similitude of a body, the Apostle argues—that as a body cannot be a body, unless it has members of different stations and uses, so God hath *set*† officers of different orders in the Church, who have all one common life, and are under one common law of the Spirit; with their several uses so distinguished, that there need be no more disorder or confusion in the Church than in the body natural.

It appears then, that although the Spirit of God be the life of this body; yet must the body itself be an outward and visible thing. It always hath been such from the beginning; when although it had some gifts

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

† Ibid. v. 28.

in it, which were proper to that time, yet had it others which were proper to this. For while it had miracles, prophecies, and diversity of tongues, it had also *teachers, governments, and helps*, which are as necessary now as they were then; for without teaching, and governing, and helping when there is need, no society ever did or ever can subsist. These therefore must remain with us to the end of the world. And the Apostle having declared, that they are all *set* in the Church by God himself; it must follow that they are set neither by the people, nor by themselves; but set by God in such a way, that we may know the thing to be of his doing; and this we do know when we see it to be done by those whom he hath already appointed. All persons of the ministry are set in the Church in an outward and visible manner, by the laying on of hands; and have been so appointed from the time of Jesus Christ to this day; yea, from the time of Moses, who was two thousand years before. *Give him a charge in their sight* *, said God to Moses, that all the people might be sure he had the true commission. The Scripture knows of no such thing

* Numb. xxvii. 19.

as a calling which is out of sight: the inward calling is ever attended with the outward, that is, by some infallible sign and testimony which all men may see and understand. And now we are upon the subject of Jewish Ordination, it is a matter worth your observing, that less is said about the governments of the Christian Church in the New Testament than we might expect, because they were copied from the Jewish. The Apostles were twelve in number, after the twelve Patriarchs who were heads of the tribes of Israel*: and the Disciples were seventy, after the seventy Elders of Moses. History also does abundantly testify, that in Christian Churches, wherever they were planted, there was a Bishop, and Priests, and Deacons; answering to the High Priest, and Priests, and Levites of the Law. For the Christian and Jewish Churches were not two, but a continuation of the one Church of God. Things were thus regularly ordained, because it is of infinite consequence to man, that he

* I am not sure that a division into tribes does not take place, in a mystical sense, in the Christian Church. See and consider Acts xxvi. 7. Jam. i. 1.

should always be able to know, by certain outward marks and signs, where and with whom the gifts of God are to be found. Where spiritual things are administered, there is ever something open to the sight of all, as a rule to direct, that we may never be left in uncertainty.

The same rule will hold good, if we apply it to the spirit and character of individual men. We are never to judge of a man from any thing which he thinks, or has thought, or which he now says and tells, of what passes in his own mind. *That* may be evidence to *him*, but it is none to *us*; and is therefore never to be drawn into a rule. There must be some outward mark; therefore saith our Lord, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may *see* your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." We may call ourselves the Disciples of Christ in heart and affection, and think ourselves to be such: but how are other men to know that we are truly so? Here again we have an outward sign to direct us: "By this shall all men *know* that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another*." The reason is good, and

* John xiii. 35.

the rule is general: we are to know men by their fruits, not by their thoughts; and to judge of them accordingly, not by what they say, but by what they do.

After this, you will not wonder, that a contrary rule is followed by those who have any intention to deceive. They lead you off in the first place from outward means and visible evidences; that when you are unsettled in this respect, the way may be open, and you may be carried into farther delusion.

Having now laid my foundation, by shewing you the invariable rule of divine wisdom, with the reasons of it; this alone, if you bear it in mind, may be sufficient to keep you in the right way, and preserve you from going into the by-paths of religion. But as there are specious objections, from which well-disposed minds may be in danger, I shall produce and answer some of the chief of them.

1. It is made a grand objection against the Church, that the people who follow it are formal and lifeless in their profession. Too many of them are so: we see and lament it: but how many soever they may be, this is no reason for leaving them—far from it: for, hath it not always been thus? The Kingdom
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Heaven is like a net cast into the sea, *which gathered of every kind, both bad and good**. In the Church, the righteous and the wicked are mixt together; and if this be a reason for leaving the Church, it always was a reason; the best people should always have left it; and then, what would have become of it? Allowing such persons to be as good as they think themselves, would it not be better that they should stay, and try if they can amend, by their good advice and example, those who are not so perfect as themselves? That would be a charitable measure. Besides, if the bad affright and drive them away from the Church, ought not the good to prevail with them to continue in it? Is it just to desert the righteous for the sake of the wicked? Many devout godly people are to be found in the Church, more than are commonly observed. Much of the fear and love of God is with many Christians, who make no great shew of themselves. In the worst of times, the Church has many who know God, and are known of him. Could any thing be more corrupt than the generality of the Jewish people were in the time of our blessed Saviour? Yet you read of Anna the

* Matth. xiii. 47.

Prophets,

Prophetess, who departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. Many bad people frequented the place, but that was no reason with her for leaving it; she did not follow the people, she followed God; and there at the latter end of her days she found him: she saw the blessed Jesus there; which would not have happened, if she had objected to the bad members of the congregation, as not holy and good enough for her to assemble with. And did not Christ himself frequent this same Temple afterwards, and teach in it afterwards, though there were many great and scandalous abuses, which he endeavoured to reform; not by taking affront and leaving the congregation, but by staying with them, and bearing with their contradiction and ill humours.

But, as the heart of man, when judging of itself, is very deceitful, it may not be for reasons of piety, as they believe and would have it supposed, when persons forsake the congregation; but for reasons of a very different kind; for pride; for distinction; to shew the world how much wiser they are: and if that should be the case, will not the pride that separates them from man separate them

them from God at the same time, and spoil all their religion, instead of bringing them nearer to perfection? Christians would not be so weak as they are in this respect, if they did but duly consider, that true piety does not lead to *will-worship*, in which men consult the pleasing of their fancy; but in a conformity of the mind to the will and the ways of God. This is the severest trial of man, and few are able to endure it: nay, not one amongst us, without the special grace of God, disposing the heart to self-abasement, and poverty of spirit.

There is another danger which persons may bring themselves into, by boasting of an higher degree of piety than that of the Church: for while they do themselves no real good, they may be doing much harm to other Christians. The great godliness, on which they value themselves, may prove at last to be false and counterfeit; or it may appear weak and ignorant; more zealous than wise; or it may be envious and quarrelsome: and thereby they will give persons occasion to say, that all pretension to superior piety is a suspicious thing, generally taken up for some bad purpose. Thus they bring universal reproach upon a religious

religious character: it being concluded from their example, that honest and sensible people will be better thought of, if they purposely avoid all appearances of godliness, and discover as little of it as possible in their words and actions. This is a fearful conclusion, and hastens many a dangerous downfall. I have heard, and many others must have heard, persons talking and arguing after this fashion, whom it is out of our power to convince; and perhaps it is convenient to themselves that they never should be convinced. It is one lamentable consequence of division, that the mouths of such vain talkers are opened. Persons divided in their religious sentiments watch one another with an evil eye; and instead of hiding one another's faults, are delighted with detections and aggravations. This is to the great disadvantage of all piety: it is an evil we should be studious to avoid; and the prospect of that havock which it makes amongst us, should be one great inducement towards a prudent and charitable union with our fellow Christians.

It is said farther, that there is better teaching out of the Church. But I do sincerely believe on the other hand, that bad as teaching

ing of the Church may be, there is worse teaching out of it than in it. This indeed we must confess, that so far as the doctrine depends upon the minister, it is not always right: but we may say at the same time, that so far as the doctrine depends upon the Church, it is never wrong. The Church duly delivers the teaching of God in the Scriptures; and has an unexceptionable form of sound Christian teaching in her Homilies: I wish the people heard them more frequently, and that the spirit of those Homilies was followed by all the Teachers of the Church.

But, does all religion consist in man's preaching? Some argue as if they thought so. Hath not God preached to us all in his Gospel; and doth he not say, "My House shall be called the House of Prayer?" Did not the Apostles, though appointed to preach in all the world, go to pray in the Temple? They understood that God had ordained them to preach, with design that they should convert the world to the practice of praying: and it would have been strange, if they had not set the example of it in their own persons.—*Preaching* meant at first the publishing of the Gospel;

Gospel; that the world might be brought over to it: when the world is converted, and the Scriptures are received as the word of God, the duty then is to read, and to pray, and to act, as the Gospel instructs; which Gospel is now daily preaching to us all. The more hopeful employment of the ministry *now*, and of more extensive benefit, is that of teaching the first elements of Christianity in the Catechism. Preaching will never teach these, if they have not been taught before. No science can be understood properly unless we begin with its elements. For this reason I have always been so desirous, that children should be well instructed in their Catechism. I received the advice many years ago from a Bishop of this Church, who was your Diocesan*: he said, "Whatever you do be diligent in catechising; it is of much more use than preaching." So indeed it is: and there are those who can witness that I have never been wanting in the practice: in which if any minister engages with sincerity and affection, I can promise him, from my own experience, that the smiles of the little children of his parish will make

* Bp. Hinchcliffe.

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him amends for many of the frowns he may meet with in the world.

It is a farther temptation to people to leave the Church, because it has been supposed of late years, that something better is now found out, which will answer the purpose without it—I mean a *new birth*. That there is a new birth in the Scripture, and that it is necessary to Salvation, no man can deny; for, saith our Saviour, “except a man be born again of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*.” There is then a new birth of the *spirit*; but as *water* is mentioned with it, it must mean the new birth in Christian *Baptism*. There is also a *Regeneration* spoken of by St. Paul†; but as it is called the *washing* of Regeneration, this also must refer to the water of Baptism. The Church of England follows this doctrine of the Scripture, and understands Regeneration as the gift of God in Baptism: for this is the language of the Church in the office: “We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased Thee to *regenerate* this infant with thy Holy Spirit.” Regeneration therefore is the work of the Holy Spirit in Baptism:

* John iii. 5.

† Tit. iii. 5.

and

and neither the Scripture nor the Church give us any encouragement to believe, that Christians are ever baptized by the hearing of a Sermon. If it be said, that the presence of the Spirit of God cannot be without the effect of Regeneration; and that every person who has the Spirit of God, must be born of God; this is not accurate Divinity; even allowing them to have the Spirit as they say. For the gift of the Spirit may be one thing, and Regeneration may be another. When the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard the word, this was the effect of preaching: but the Apostle commanded those very persons to be baptised with water, although they had received the Holy Ghost *. Therefore the receiving of the Holy Ghost, so far as this is the effect of preaching, is different from what is done in Baptism, and is not what is meant by Regeneration, or the New Birth. If it can be shewn, that the Gospel any where promises a New Birth, independent of Baptism, we will believe it: but as the Church could never find it, we never shall; and they that teach it, and say there is experience for it, have no warrant from the Scripture.

* Acts x. 47.

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A famous Preacher of late times, who believed, and pleaded for, all the extraordinary symptoms of a New Birth, refers us for the reality of it to numbers of people who had experience of it. "Ask them," says he, "they will not deceive you." But supposing they are deceived themselves, they will in that case deceive us also; and it is no wonder if they should; for most men are inclined to repeat a story which magnifies themselves; and their teachers are willing that they should repeat it, for it magnifies them too*. These facts, whether true or false, are attended with a mistake. The conversion of the mind to a sober and godly life is here confounded with a New Birth; and the tendency of this is to depreciate the means of Grace; which enthusiasm never fails to do: but Conversion and Regeneration are never confounded in the

* The like wonders were boasted of by the Puritans of the last century; whose ministry, as it is noted by *Merick Casaubon*, produced in their followers "first *desperation*, or somewhat very near to it; then an *absolute confidence* grounded upon it. That this is the only way, is an invention of their own, which I think hath more of policy in it, in the first inventors and abettors, than of ignorance." *Casaubon on Credulity and Incredulity*, p. 193.

Scripture :

Scripture: they are different things, and the one may be without the other. Infants are subjects of Regeneration in Baptism; but they are not capable of Conversion: nor do they want it, being already in that simple unassuming state of mind, to which grown persons are to be converted, and become as little children *. Baptism is one of the necessary means of Grace: it is the gift of God: no man can make it, or substitute any thing else in the place of it: but if he wishes to raise a party, and make a Church of his own, he will depreciate Baptism, and teach you how you may do without it, by finding a sort of conversion, which will answer the same end. He will lead you from outward means to inward testimonies: texts will be misapplied; and the evidences of Christianity will all be reduced to personal experience; of which experience another person knows nothing, and in which the person himself may be grossly mistaken. The consequences are very bad; for some think they have this experience, and proceed with confidence to farther errors: others wish for it in vain, and not being able to perceive it, fall into despair, and sometimes

* Matth. xviii. 3.

into distraction; they are left without the witness which they are taught to expect, and therefore think they are lost. But the witness which the Scripture teaches, is that of *faith and a good conscience*: faith is the witness to ourselves; and obedience, which is the fruit of it, is the witness to others. In this doctrine there is no danger.

Before I conclude, let me forewarn you, that good people are in danger (perhaps in most danger) of being imposed upon by strange appearances; supposing them to be *new*, when they are not. Above two hundred years ago, the party that began to trouble this kingdom, and at length completed its ruin, began with setting up the spirit, and decrying the order and authority both of Church and State. The people that troubled the Christian Church, in its earliest days, were always of the same fashion: they never failed to *despise government*, and taught their followers to do the same*. They boasted of superior gifts in praying, preaching, and converting: but the Apostle settled that argument for ever with the Church of Corinth. They were disputing, and dividing themselves

* 2 Pet. ii. 10. Jude 8.

into parties, upon the reputation of their gifts: but he shewed them, that although it was a good thing to have good gifts, there was a more excellent way of salvation, the way of peace and charity; without which all their gifts, however great and wonderful in the sight of the people, would be of no value in the sight of God. It signifies not (argues he) what I have and what I understand; if I have no charity I am nothing. How extremely dangerous is it then, to break the order and peace of the Church; even though it be done with a sincere desire to promote faith and piety! for whatever good appearances may attend it for a time, they will not end well. If we do evil that good may come, we shall find, sooner or later, that the evil will remain and the good will be lost: which might be confirmed by the recent example of a large body of people, who are now divided from us without being united among themselves. Division is not the way to unity: all experience teaches us, that it leads to more division; and that there can in fact be no security, no *pillar and ground* for truth to rest upon, no stability, no certainty, but in that Church, with its doctrines, institutions,

tions, and orders, which God hath appointed in the world. I therefore end as I began: I say, *Hear the Church*. Let the Churchman understand, that he then only hears the Church as he ought, when the christian forms lead him to the christian life. And let others learn, that if they would have the christian life, they must have the christian forms. These hath God joined together as soul and body. No man ever had, or ever will have, any authority to put them asunder; and I have given you my reasons why it cannot be attempted without danger to the christian cause, and to the salvation of christian people.

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